GTU | Berkeley Journal of Religion and Theology

Berkeley Journal of Religion and Theology
Volume 4, Issue 2
ISSN 2380-7458

Article

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Source: *Berkeley Journal of Religion and Theology* 4, no. 2 (2018): 33-52.
Published By: Graduate Theological Union © 2018
Online article published on: September 25, 2018

Ritualizing Bodies:
Exploring Religious and Political Affects

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ABSTRACT: Engaging with Donovan Schaefer's phenomenological strand of affect theory, Brian Massumi's politics of affect, as well as Sara Ahmed's analysis of Edmund Husserl's "table" vis-à-vis the work of various ritual theorists (Grimes, Turner, Jennings, et al), this essay explores the intersection of ritual studies and affect theory by focusing on ritualizing bodies. As examples, I look at the practice of the Eucharist and the Pentecostal altar call, the affective politics of Donald J. Trump, as well as protest as ritualizing. Insofar as ritual includes the social and the bodily, affect theory provides a lens to look specifically at how bodies can be corporeally affect-ed by systems of power embedded in and constituted by rituals. In this way, rituals shapes bodies both religiously and politically by learning and navigating through learning and navigating affectively textured worlds.

Berkeley Journal of Religion and Theology, Vol. 4, no. 2

How do rituals teach bodies? In turn, how do bodies inform and shape rituals? What role do the senses play in these constitutions and reiterations? This paper explores the possible intersections of ritual and affect theory, offering a conversation where the two coalesce. Insofar as ritual includes the social and bodily experience, affect theory can provide a lens to look specifically at how bodies are affected by systems of power—such as religion and politics—through their affective attachments, including how ritual shapes the religious and the political and how the religious and the political, in turn, shape ritual. A conversation between these two fields can help underscore ways bodies experience and navigate through sensory stimuli, determining *how* one ritualizes.

All bodies are ritualizing bodies; they engage in repetitious rites and acts that move them to and fro, shaping and constituting identity in the process. In other words, "The human choice is not *whether* to ritualize, but when, how, where, and why."[1] Often times, rituals are performed, creating observers and limited participants. Sometimes, one may even be unaware of exactly which role they are enacting. Nevertheless, rituals are a part of who one is and who one is becoming. Inherent in ritualization, therefore, are bodily negotiations, which tether bodies to systems of power and subsequently teach forms of bodily knowledge. Feeling and responding to ritualistic phenomena teaches a form of knowledge. Whether it is in crying, laughing, singing, sitting in silence, closing eyes, bowing heads or moving in a spontaneous or choreographed manner, all of these sensations are affectively conjured in bodies. Thus, it is not *whether* bodies engage in ritual. The issue becomes how to analyze and articulate what is happening within ritualizing bodies in various religious and political contexts. In what follows, I engage how bodies negotiate systems of power and knowledge through affect theory.

The work of Donovan Schaefer is important with regard to religion; he describes a phenomenological domain of affect theory that pays special attention to "embodied experience outside of the productions of language."[2] This does not erase the productions of language, for without language it would not be possible to discuss and theorize phenomena. However, Schaefer's focus on embodied experience outside of language only enhances the ways language seeks to explain and supplement experience. Since the phenomenological approach is amenable to embodied experience, I use this approach when talking about the personal experience of religious ritualizing and affect. Further, I rely on the work of queer theorists to push the boundaries of not only what constitutes a body, but also how bodies are conditioned through the affective, repetitive nature of ritual. Sara Ahmed is of particular interest with regard to how

[1] Tom Faw Driver, *Liberating Rites: Understanding the Transformative Power of Ritual* (Charleston, SC: BookSurge Publishing, 2006), 6.

[2] Schaefer gives much attention to the linguistic fallacy, that is, the linguistic turn as made by Habermas. He notes: "The linguistic fallacy assumes that the medium of power is language—that depth, complex responses, experiences, and decisions cannot take place without the machinery of a linguisticized reason." Donovan O. Schaefer, *Religious Affects: Animality, Evolution, and Power* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 8, 13.

bodies and objects interact and stick to each other through the circulation of affect and the intensified proximity of bodies and objects.

Finally, I look at the work of affect theorist Brian Massumi and his work on the connection between politics and ritual. What I want to suggest is that the same affective forces that constitute the religiosity of rituals foster their politicization. Thus, by looking at the offering of the Eucharist in different church traditions, the ecstatic possibility of the altar call of Pentecostalism, and the animated, embodied politics of protest, I underscore how religious and political ritualizing bodies share the same affective resonances and responses.

It is necessary to begin with a few caveats. First, ritual, while ubiquitous, is not monolithic or neatly defined. The word is elusive. When I refer to ritual, I define it within these parameters: *a meaningful process or event, religious, social, or a combination of both, that is contextually constituted by a series of actions or postures performed with/in the body according to a particular standard or prescribed order, in which the individual or collective connects and communicates with a power or metaphor or symbol that extends beyond the immediacy of the event*. Second, affect, like ritual, is not homogenous. Rather, affect theory has two genealogies that yield various approaches. For the purposes of this essay, I am interested in both traditions of affect: the phenomenological strand that originated in the research of Silvan Tomkins and was later developed by the work of Donovan Schaefer, as well as the strand found in Baruch Spinoza's work, developed by Gilles Deluze, which Brian Massumi engages. While I will at times refer to "phenomenological affect theory" or "affect theory" to reflect these differences, let me specify here that I engage with Tomkins' tradition in the first section and Spinoza's in the second.

Part 1
PHENOMENOLOGICAL AFFECT, BODIES, AND RELIGIOUS RITUALIZING

How is ritual embodied? Such a question shifts the focus from *what* to *who*, from the act of ritualizing to the one that ritualizes. Ritual is embodied insofar as it is concerned with and/or occurs within the body. For example, kneeling to pray is a posture that the body performs. At the

same time, praying silently is also a posture that allows the internal to speak without being heard. This section explores the ways phenomenological affect theory underscores how bodies are shaped through sensory stimulation outside the threshold of cognition, that is to say, subconsciously. I am concerned with how shapes of emotion—for example, fear or shame—express this formation. Bodies, neither plastic nor static, are sites of physiological *technologies*[3] of power and knowledge, with circulations of affects surging between them and worlds.

What Does Phenomenological Affect Theory Have to do with Ritual?

In *Religious Affects: Animality, Evolution, and Power,* Donovan Schaefer challenges the assumption that, at its core, religion is primarily about language, books, and belief. He asks, instead: "In what ways is religion—for humans and other animals—about the way things feel, the things we want, the way our bodies are guided through thickly textured, magnetized worlds?"[4] In other words, what if religion is neither exclusively cognitive nor exclusively human? To modulate: "How do material bodies insert themselves into cultural-intellectual landscapes mediated by discourse? How do the thick, quasi-stable shapes of affect circulating heavily within and between bodies condition and drive the phenomenological geography of religion?"[5] While language, books, and belief are tools to better understand religion, what Schaefer is suggesting is that the impetus for these formulations and their iterations may be more primitively and instinctually constituted.

Schaefer gives the example of the farmer to exemplify how bodies are invested in fields of power without the mediation of language. Whereas the farmer may be viewed as one that has a certain cosmology and acts out of that understanding, he contends that the farmer's action *is* a cosmology, a way of thinking that constitutes a particular cosmos:

[3] By "technology," Schaefer means not limited to industrial infrastructure or mechanistic matters, but should extend to relationships involving power, knowledge, and discourse. Ibid., 51.

[4] Ibid., 3.

[5] Ibid., 37.

> *Religious Affects* opens up a line of inquiry that is invisible to this analytics: it enables us to propose (as one hypothesis among many) that the farmer didn't start with a cosmology, a need to write the world differently, but with a complex of material sensations emerging out of an affectively driven, embodied practice… Before language, before cosmology, even before "thought," understood as a way of converting a situation into an explanation, the farmer's body moves, interacts with the world, and produces a field of sensations through that interaction.[6]

Thus, for the farmer, there is no written text to engage with—their hands in the dirt serve as a sort of text, an inscription of the world that is performed.

A farmer's work is embodied practice insofar as it is through their body that they come into contact with the material world and their place within it. There is a form of felt knowledge within this economy; the farmer literally *feels* their way through the world, engaging a field of sensations that shapes what they do, how they do it, such that it becomes second nature. Consequently, the farmer's work is informed by phenomenological affects, the subtle shapes and textures that inform their embodied existence outside of the productions of language—which are the "shapes and textures that inform and structure our embodied experience at or beneath the threshold of cognition."[7] For Schaefer, the example of the farmer brings together ontology (as the study of being or what is) and phenomenology (as the study of conscious experience) into an "onto-phenomenology," engendering what he describes as, "the way it feels to be the kind of bodies we are."[8]

Bodies and Power-Knowledge-Affect

Much work has been done on bodies and their relationship to power. For example, Schaefer sees affect theory as a supplementation to Foucault's "analytics of power," a set of tools for analyzing power through its

[6] Ibid., 9.
[7] Ibid., 24.
[8] Ibid., 14.

engagements with bodies (within and outside of language).[9] Mapping the relationship between bodies and systems of power is a way of examining how power makes bodies move, for power exists in action. Consequently, Schaefer supplements Foucault's formula of *power-knowledge*, suggesting instead a nexus of *power-knowledge-affect*: "it details the ways affects link bodies to systems of power and to regimes of information."[10] It is important to acknowledge that affect, in this way, challenges the classical liberal notion of self-sovereignty that emerged in Western modernity that places the *liber*—the free man that is rational, autonomous, singular, and so on—at the center of understanding as it relates to politics, reason, knowledge, and religion. Instead, affect complicates this notion by exploring how affective responses/resonances choreograph bodies in relation with power—what theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick calls "our queer little gods."[11]

Schaefer notes that identifying bodies as constituted and shaped by embodied epistemes—in relation with materialized forms of power, such as religion—highlights the dynamics of bodily engagement with affects that modulate the ways one thinks and talks about religion: "Rather than viewing religion[s] purely as artifacts of discourse, we see them as submerged in bodies, composed out of a suite of embodied forms that, at least in part, precede discursive determination."[12] The word "submerged" places the primary location of religion not in the productions of language, cognition, will, and free choice, but in bodies; which is to say, it is embodied. In conversation with Sedgwick's work on the "Pedagogy of Buddhism," Schaefer states: "Buddhist practices have effects on bodies that are not reducible to the discursive vehicles by which those practices are transmitted… Religious discourse is not the only mechanism by which religion articulates bodies to power."[13] By looking to embodied experiences

[9] Foucault's understanding of how power produces knowledge or, rather, particular forms of knowledge, and how this production affects bodies informs Schaefer's own understanding of bodies. He is a self-proclaimed Foucauldian. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* (New York, NY: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1980), quoted in Schaefer, *Religious Affects*, 7.

[10] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), quoted in Schaefer, 35.

[11] This phrase speaks to how bodies are "phenomenologically perceptible but hovering beyond the threshold of the sovereign self." Schaefer, *Religious Affects*, 23, 35.

[12] Ibid., 55.

[13] Ibid., 57.

of power, therefore, Schaefer is arguing for an analysis that extends beyond discourse and takes into account the various layers of religious experience that extend beyond the limits of language.

Orientations, Tendencies, and Felt Pedagogy

In *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others,* Sara Ahmed addresses Edmund Husserl's work on the table. She notes that he is orientated toward the table (an object) in particular ways. For Husserl, bodies are "something touching which is touched."[14] Thus, for Ahmed, the table offers an example of how objects and others leave their impressions on the skin's surface. In other words, in the exchange of touching/being touched, bodies are shaped by the encounter. Furthermore, in being oriented toward objects, in the impressions made, objects, in turn, take shape. If bodies are oriented toward objects, and if they leave impressions from the encounter, then they form attachments. "Phenomenology helps us to explore how bodies are shaped by histories, which they perform in their comportment, their posture, and their gestures."[15] As a result, what bodies *tend* to do are the effects of histories rather than originary. As such, bodies "tend toward" certain objects, and, conversely, these encounters shape what bodies tend toward. To further posit this point, Ahmed likens this dynamic to Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI):

> [W]e repeat some actions, sometimes over and over again, and this is partly about the nature of the work we might do. Our body takes the shape of this repetition; *we get stuck in certain alignments as an affect of this work…* The object on which and through which I work hence leaves its impression: the action, as intending, as well as tending toward the object, shapes my body in this way and that. The work of repetition is not neutral work; *it orients the body in some ways rather than others.*[16]

[14] Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 54.
[15] Ibid., 56.
[16] Ibid., 57.

Orientation through repetitions between the surfaces of bodies and objects, with the sticking of certain alignments, forms ritualizing bodies. As Tom Driver points out, "Ritualizations do not start from nothing. They are elaborations upon simple behaviors already known."[17] In other words, within the structures of histories that orient bodies toward certain objects, there is room for elaboration—even improvisation. These elaborations build and accumulate. For Driver, speech is an elaboration of nonverbal ritualization, which maintains an inherent relationship between structure and the event.

Religious Ritualizing Bodies

I return to Schaefer's fundamental question about exploring the concept of religion beyond language, books, and belief. He asks a follow-up question with regard to whether religion might be understood as constitutive of "clustered material forms, aspects of our embodied life, such as other bodies, food, community, labor, movement, music, sex, natural landscapes, architecture, and objects?"[18] How might ritual be considered as a part of this material cluster? Do different approaches to ritual form their own clusters and their own amalgamations? I would like to supplement his question in light of Ahmed's own "queer phenomenology" of orientations, objects, and others. How might religion—and here, I am speaking specifically of ritual within religion—include attachments between bodies and these material clusters? On the one hand, religion becomes an avenue that transforms how things—objects, bodies, worlds—feel; which is to say, it generates certain forms of knowledge. On the other hand, how objects, bodies, and worlds feel transforms what is experienced and articulated as "religious." Ritual becomes an enactment of and participation in this shaping, this orienting, this pedagogy.

Consider how Schaefer highlights such ways of knowing in his analysis of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's work on Buddhist epistemology. He writes: "…for Sedgwick, pedagogy is about circulation, opening up the possibility of repetition, reiteration, mutation, and transformation as a field

[17] Tom Faw Driver, *Liberating Rites: Understanding the Transformative Power of Ritual* (Charleston, SC: BookSurge Publishing, 2006), 19.

[18] Schaefer, *Religious Affects*, 3.

of experiences intersects with the concealed and submerged layers of bodies… The pedagogical process, the protocol globalization, is a dynamic of bodies and worlds, a history formed by the collision of material and embodied histories operating not in the fluid space of discursive plasticity, but a repertoire of intransigent elements."[19] Like Ahmed, repetitive circulations (she might say impressions or encounters), therefore, function as a felt pedagogy, teaching bodies "this is how it feels to be us." It speaks of both a history and an inheritance; these orient and shape bodies in particular ways, constituting an identity that orientates one in certain directions (i.e., toward certain objects, and not others). Schaefer concludes:

> If the phenomenological horizon of the body is constituted by a tissue of affectively charged objects, then not only do bodies change, but the horizon of political awareness itself evolves. *Pedagogy is about transforming the way the world feels, rather than simply absorbing knowledge*: the body 'learns by switching affections' [emphasis mine].[20]

In this way, the body is constituted by subject/object entanglements and amalgamations—i.e., it is co-constitutive. The word "horizon" speaks to a particular direction that one is facing, which is to say, one's orientation. Rather than simply absorbing ideas in the intellect only, felt pedagogy transforms the way the world *feels*—changing bodies and influencing which direction they face in the process. To bring together Schaefer and Ahmed, by transforming how the world feels, bodies are oriented or re-oriented, making impressions on the surfaces of bodies and objects, and forming affective attachments between them. Ahmed suggests: "Think of a sticky object; what it picks up on its surface 'shows' where it has traveled and what has come into contact with [it]."[21] How might ritualizing bodies be envisioned in this way, as travelers with passports signifying their travels? Can a connection be drawn between bodily learning and bodily knowing?

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[19] Ibid., 61-62
[20] Ibid., 67.
[21] Ibid., 40.

Theodore W. Jennings, in his essay "On Ritual Knowledge," mentions the repetitive nature of ritual which transmits or teaches knowledge. For Jennings, one learns the ritual by doing the ritual. For example, the doing of the Eucharist teaches one how to do the Eucharist, and the Eucharist reciprocates, i.e., helps shape and form ritualistic identity. Thus, knowing and becoming constitute the epistemological and pedagogical experiences of ritual. Most importantly, his idea that ritual knowledge is gained by and through the body brings embodiment to the fore of his analysis.

Thinking of embodiment and ritual, how might Jennings' ritual knowledge be extrapolated toward an understanding of how bodies are shaped by what/how they feel and how they approach the Eucharist? That is to say, how does the Eucharist, as an object, leave its mark on the ritual body? From where does the Eucharist arrive? It sits on the table. In high church traditions, the priest orients the congregation to the table, preparing them to receive. The gathered are invited to turn toward, to approach the table; the table can be open or it can be closed. Thus, there are traditions that orient some toward the table, while others are oriented away from it, erasing it from their horizon of possibility. In the case of the latter, the mark that the table leaves on bodies is, in fact, dis-orientation; they are left behind in the impossibility of the event, as those who cannot approach the table. And how the table is used defines what it does: it can unify or fracture bodies, the community as a body—the body of Christ, as it were.

Language has the power to extend or retract an invitation to the table. As Husserl suggests, bodies are oriented in different ways vis-à-vis the table. In this way, the table is a structure, an object, where affects proliferate: in being welcomed—that is, oriented—to the table, the believer receives the gift of communion, finding sustenance, and with it the affects of joy and excitement. To those unwelcome to the table, there is conflict, marked by the affects of shame, fear, and perhaps even anger. Bodies are shaped by their past encounters with the table.

Once the welcomed bodies arrive to the table, then, the Eucharist is ingested, that is to say, taken in, embodied. Much historical debate has occurred with regard to exactly what happens with the Eucharist. Transubstantiation, for example, teaches that the bread and wine turn into

the physical body and blood of Jesus upon consumption. This shapes ritualizing bodies on a physiological level—bodies take in the bread and the drink and it becomes em-bodied. Physiologically speaking, bodies are different than before the elements were consumed, which is evidenced by material filling. The rite is repeated over and over again. In the same way that by doing the ritual one learns how to do the ritual, by partaking in the ritual, bodies become the site of ritual knowledge, such that one cannot distinguish where the object ends and the body begins.

Now consider the Pentecostal ritual of an "altar call" as an analogous site for the distillation of ritual knowledge. In the Pentecostal service, the altar call can happen at any point in the service—during worship, the message, or even during the offering. It usually follows the intensification of a moment, an emotional change that leads to ecstatic expressions. Whether prompted by an individual or group, it is an endlessly open invitation. Often, who approaches and for what reason is a matter of self-selection. In many cases, there is no physical altar, only the front of the church which signifies the altar topography. What is most important is the relationship between bodies and the altar. The power of the altar is not in its object form; it is in what it *does*, what it is used for, how it makes its impression on the ritualizing bodies. Returning to Ahmed, the altar call is a way of orienting people toward the altar, which is to say, toward the divine. As bodies approach the altar, the intensity of the affective attachments intensifies.

The "altar call" augments the altar and underscores the liminality of the space. The altar is marked as the place that bodies congregate in response to the invitation or call. Like the table, it is a place defined by the ways it is used. Sometimes, the altar is a place of repentance. Other times, it is a place for prayers of healing. In its polyvalent expressions, however, the altar remains a dynamic place of great emotional outpouring, such that the bodies are given tacit permission to respond freely: weeping, shouting, laughing, speaking in tongues, and so on.

The altar, as the physical or figurative object in this example, is sticky with affects and is shaped by the impressions left by bodies. That is, it is marked by the traces of past encounters (i.e., histories), which attracts bodies to the space and forms attachments through the stickiness of

affects. If bodies are repetitively oriented a certain way *toward* the altar, then the two have a shared history. The orientation of the altar depends on the histories of encounters—meaning, histories shape the surface. As a sticky ritual object, the altar gets stuck to the ritualizing bodies, forming an affective connection. Like sitting in a chair that comfortably fits the contours of bodies, the altar is shaped and formed through these encounters.

Ahmed notes: "Doing things 'at' the table is what makes the table what it is and not some other thing."[22] This *doing* is essential to what the table is, and it is what distinguishes it from other things. It is what separates the invitation to table in high church traditions that offer the Eucharist from the altar call in Pentecostalism. Different traditions will orient differently vis-à-vis the table and the altar, leading to different encounters and connections, but what the table or altar *does* shapes both the ritualized object and ritualizing bodies, creating a web of affective attachments between them.

Part Two

AFFECT, BODIES, AND POLITICAL RITUALIZATION

In this section, I shift to the political nature of affect. Whereas the former section looked at the ways in which affects can connect to ritualizing bodies in a religious context, I now suggest that the same affective forces lead to political ritualization. By engaging the work of Brian Massumi in conversation with Schaefer and Ahmed, I highlight how the constitution of religious and political ritualizing bodies is analogously constructed. To do so, I use the Donald J. Trump 2016 Presidential campaign and resistance to the administration as a contemporary example. I end the section with an analysis of protest—the #BlackLivesMatter movement—as a ritual act in response to the politicization of the black body.

[22] Ibid., 40.

Politics of Affect and the Trump E/Affect

In his work, *Politics of Affect*, Brian Massumi discusses the connection between affect and the political within the tradition of Spinozan affect theory. In the chapter, "Of micropreception and micropolitics," Massumi extrapolates Baruch Spinoza's definition of affect in two parts. The first part is rudimentary: affect is an ability to affect or be affected. Beyond that, there is another, more complex part: "a power to affect and be affected governs a transition, where a body passes from one state of capacitation to a diminished or augmented state of capacitation."[23] Furthermore, this transition — from one state to another — is a *felt* transition. That affectation occurs in an in-between state necessitates a transition. There are three points of interest with regard to the felt transition: (1) The felt quality of the experience; (2) the felt transition leaves a trace, constituting a memory; and (3) the capacitation of the body is completely bound up with the lived past of the body.[24] Here, it is important to name these points of interest as consonant with the work of Schaefer in general and Ahmed in particular. The felt transition is akin to Schaefer's work with bodies' affective experience of systems of power and knowledge. For Ahmed, the felt transition highlights the impressions upon surfaces — those encounters that leave a trace or mark, subtly shaping both bodies and objects in the act — as well as the coalescence of the lived past of bodies in their embodied histories.

Understanding felt experiences underscores the relational component of affect. If affect attunes bodies to felt forces, then it is enhanced and modified by the conditioning that occurs through repetition. The relational aspect brings careful attention to how bodies are constituted, not as divisions between mind and body, but as sites for "the coming together of the world, for experience, in a here-and-now prior to any possibility of assigning categories like subject or object."[25] For example, Trump supporters do not represent homogeneity of any kind. They are constitutive of complex, diverse traces and histories — histories that, along

[23] Brian Massumi, *Politics of Affect* (Cambridge: Polity, 2015), 48.
[24] Ibid., 49.
[25] Ibid., 52.

with their affective encounters with objects, ideas, and others, bring their worlds together in ways that orient them toward Trump and each other. Simply stated: they have been oriented in the same direction.

This leads to perhaps the most salient concept vis-à-vis Massumi's politics of affect: microperceptions. A microperception, for Massumi, is "not a smaller perception, it's a perception of a qualitatively different kind. It's something that is *felt without registering consciously*."[26] "Microperception is this purely affective re-beginning of the world."[27] In this sense, the bodies not only experience these affective re-beginnings, but they feel and register them as a "material quality," that is, a "coming quality of experience that is being actively lived-in before it's actually lived out."[28] The phrase "lived-in before it is lived out" suggests that a politics of affect is an inner lived reality — perhaps before even thought out or cognitively processed — that shapes one's orientation to what is visible on their horizon. If microperceptions are affective in that they are felt without registering cognitively, then how might microperceptions be conceptualized in politics? Why are some people strongly attracted to certain ideals, while vehemently opposed to others? For Massumi, it is a matter of how bodies are affectively attuned in different ways.

"Affective attunement" focuses on difference in unison. According to Massumi, "There is no sameness of affect. There is affective difference in the same event."[29] "Politics, approached affectively, is an art of emitting the interruptive signs, triggering the cues, that attune bodies while activating their capacities differentially. Affective politics is inductive."[30] Politics, in this way, is an art: bodies can be attuned to the same event in different ways, leading to affective difference. For example, how would a Hillary Clinton supporter respond differently to chants of "Lock her up!"? While this chant riled up crowds of thousands of Trump enthusiasts, it did not resound the same way for Clinton supporters, nor did it elicit the same affective responses. The difference depends on how bodies were

[26] Ibid., 53. Emphasis mine.
[27] Ibid., 54.
[28] Ibid., 55.
[29] Ibid., 56.
[30] Ibid., 56.

conditioned and shaped in their histories in relationship to the chant and how they are conditioned and oriented as a result.

Microperception, particularly the notion of "re-cueing," coalesces with what Schaefer describes as the reshaping of bodies through their bodily circuitry. In any Trump rally, the affective difference may be stark between a Trump supporter and a Trump protestor; beyond the obviously vast ideological differences that exist between them, there exists a felt dimension that provokes bodily responses ranging from spoken language to physical gestures. For example, one common theme to many Trump voters is his appeal to upsetting the status quo toward something new and more ideal. How people respond to his intentions depends on their affective attunement. What was once cognitively processed now residually resides affectively in the body as an archive or bricolage of feeling. What is necessary, therefore, is an understanding, not of the difference between affect and ideology, but an understanding of their relationship. Schaefer contends that "[t]he phenomenological is political."[31] Meaning, that which is felt is lived-out. The rally serves as a venue for ritualizing; for the gathering of bodies into the same space is filled with music, chants, and a political address — the makings and markings of consecrated, ritualized space.

Affect and Ideology as Orientations

A politics of microperception is what Massumi refers to as a micropolitics. Whereas Massumi writes: "The Obama campaign's re-cueing of fear towards hope might be seen as targeting that micropolitical level, interestingly, through macro-media means"[32]; the exact opposite could be said of Trump. He was able to re-cue much of the American public insofar as he was successful in moving away from affective feelings of hope towards fear — whether it was fear of Muslims, security-based fear, or fear of being passed over. Massumi notes: "Micropolitics, affective politics, seeks the degrees of openness of any situation, in hopes of priming an alter-accomplishment. Just modulating a situation in a way that amplifies a previously unfelt potential to the point of perceptibility is an alter-

[31] Schaefer, *Religious Affects*, 8.
[32] Massumi, *The Politics of Affect*, 58.

accomplishment."[33] The incipience of Trump's birtherism and his micro-aggressions toward President Obama go as far back as 2011,[34] and offer a case in point. Micropolitics is reactionary; it reorients bodies to respond in certain ways to particular ideas through the process of slowly re-cueing. In other words, micropolitics subtly shapes the way ideas *feel* to bodies while, at the same time, teaching bodies how to *feel* about ideas. It is a double move that is intrinsically pedagogical. It is the felt aspect of affective politics that pushes the conversation beyond ideology and ideology critique. This returns to the notion of felt pedagogical formation, as well as Ahmed's analysis of histories, impressions, and the mutual shaping of bodies/objects through orientation and proximity. Ideology follows the affects, forming semi-stable attachments that oscillate and reverberate incessantly between the conscious and unconscious.

Simply stated: ideology is a way of orienting bodies in a particular direction. Re-cueing, therefore, is re-orienting, of moving bodies away from certain affects and ideas toward a new direction. With the arrival of the event, there are open-ended possibilities and tendencies to be affected, to be oriented. Affective attunements can be modulated, elaborated, and improvised. Harmony and dissonance become possible as bodies respond to the register and intervals of the affective waveforms. In what ways does ritual tap into these microperceptions?

Protest as Ritualizing

How do affects fuel ritualization and determine what ritualizing bodies can do? To return to Ahmed, since bodies are shaped (1) by the impressions that objects make on them and, (2) by the formed histories that these encounters/impressions constitute, I now consider how bodies are oriented toward ritual objects in a political sense, that is, toward certain objects/other bodies and away from others. For Massumi, the event affectively attunes bodies. This happens through microperceptions, the subtle felt transitions that occur incessantly. Tendencies, therefore, shape bodies in the political realm as well as the religious, and, at the same time,

[33] Ibid.

[34] "Trump on Birtherism: Wrong, and Wrong," *FactCheck.org*, September 28, 2016, acc. December 10, 2017, http://www.factcheck.org/2016/09/trump-on-birtherism-wrong-and-wrong/.

there is still the possibility of being re-cued or re-oriented in a different direction.

Consider the politicization of the black body in US society — in particular, the response of the #BlackLivesMatter movement to police executions of young, unarmed black men and women. The movement is replete with ritual elements: music, chanting, community, organized marching/events, art work, gestures, and so on. Protest, as a response, in its many forms, becomes a form of ritual performance. Great ritual performances such as protest "link our most 'advanced' ideas and aspirations with some of our most 'primitive' tendencies."[35] That is to say, rituals do not start from nothing, out of nowhere: "They are elaborations upon simple behaviors already known."[36] Such elaborations underscore the relationship between nature and culture, and evince further how ritual can be formed by the needs of community.

Whereas the first section of this essay explored how bodies respond to systems of power such as religion, protest is a way bodies respond to systems of political power that are oppressive. Whereas the Eucharist speaks of spiritual nourishment that becomes a part of the body, protest is about a different, fundamental kind of nourishment: survival. Said differently, when the ways in which people are oriented become harmful to others, resistance is the necessary work that involves dis-orientation and re-orientation. When ritual seeks to do the work of dis-orienting, the task becomes acknowledging the histories of impressions and encounters that exist — as with Ahmed — while also seeking to be reoriented in new ways (Massumi). In this way, how is ritual dis-orienting? What effect does that have on the political ritualizing body?

Ritual theorist Ronald L. Grimes critically engages the work of Bourdieu, who believed that by placing bodies in prescribed postures, their associated feelings and states of mind are re-evoked.[37] Ritualizing bodies, through protest, perform — that is, act out — the role that must be conveyed. #BlackLivesMatter imagines and portrays a just society where

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[35] While this refers to the emergence of ritual in humankind's evolution, "primitive" is not meant pejoratively, but speaks to the instinctual impulses that Schaefer mentions above. Driver, *Liberating Rites*, 14.

[36] Ibid., 19.

[37] Ronald L. Grimes, *The Craft of Ritual Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 245.

black bodies are valued and cherished. Through the constant contact with objects and others, protestors are oriented toward each other, in solidarity, in proximity. Being proximate to the event (protest) intensifies the affective potency of the event, such that bodies become attuned to the elements of the event: chanting, singing, marching, signs, gestures, and so on. Consider the gesture of "hands up!" This liturgy re-evokes and reenacts the story of Michael Brown's execution. In the retelling, bodies are affectively attuned to the event (protest) through the affective landscape that is produced. It is also exemplified in die-ins, where bodies obstruct the flow of traffic. By halting the flow of traffic, this ritual forces people to become observers or even participants—there's no choice, no middle ground. The event is intensified by the proximity of and urgency of such provocation, offering possible itineraries: orientation, dis-orientation, and/or re-orientation. Consider, finally, the role a chant has played in the movement. The words, written by Assata Shakur, are led in a liturgical manner: call and response.

> It is our duty to fight for our freedom.
> (*It is our duty to fight for our freedom*.)
> It is our duty to win.
> (*It is our duty to win*.)
> We must love each other and support each other.
> (*We must love each other and support each other*.)
> We have nothing to lose but our chains.
> (*We have nothing to lose but our chains*.)[38]

In creating an emphatic call and response, the chant unites the gathered community. The words exude affectively from the leader and are echoed by the crowd, amplifying the sounds of struggle and freedom. To join the chant in concert is to lend one's voice to those ends. Repeating the chant, like the stanzas of a hymn, allows more voices to join. In this way, the chant not only unites and amplifies the voices of the gathered, but it also reimagines reality toward the responsibility (duty) of fighting for freedom. Protest is ritualizing and the ritualizing is protest.

Ronald L. Grimes' work on the Sante Fe Fiesta (festival) is helpful in such a reimagining of ritualizing. Rather than asking, "What is ritual?",

[38] Assata Shakur, *Assata: An Autobiography* (London: Zed, 2014), 52.

Grimes advocates for posing, instead, the question: "In such-and-such a circumstance how shall we use the term 'ritual'?"[39] Here, I return to Ahmed with regard to the table. In the same way that the table is defined by how it is used (what it *does*), can the same be said for ritual? In the context of protest, as it is with fiesta, what is ritualized? How is that ritual embodied and acted-out through the body, and how does it — like the table — orient and shape particular bodies in particular ways?

While in protest, ritualizing bodies seek to dis/re-orient, they also create and inhabit space—interstices—for these transformations to occur. In that sense, protest models liminality. Massumi's idea of improvisation and elaboration return to the fore here. In the event, affective attunement means a tendency to be open to something to come. Here, protest offers both a depiction of how things should be oriented with a hope that bodies and objects can be dis/re-oriented in a just way. How might protest ritualizing be thought of as a means of transubstantiation, that is, transforming injustice, hate, and fear into justice, love, and peace? As with the above chant, words become ritualized — ingested and embodied — when used for ritualistic purposes.

Protest rituals encompass embedded affects and cognitive aspirations, by bringing bodies into contact, yet again, with objects and others — leaving traces, creating tendencies, and seeking to dis/re-orient bodies as a result. The acts and encounters also shape these bodies. The open-ended and affective nature of the event always leaves room for a "to-come." As Ahmed notes in her conclusion: "If orientations point us to the future, to what we are moving toward, then they also keep open the possibility of changing directions and of finding other paths."[40] For protest, these other paths are marked by hope, freedom, and justice.

Conclusion

Ritualizing is not simply an act; it constitutes and shapes identity. Bodies are shaped and taught by what they do. Out of the overflow of identity, interests, and concerns, bodies ritualize. These ritualizing bodies negotiate the felt pedagogies of religious and political orientations, opening up the

[39] Grimes, *The Craft of Ritual Studies*, 188.
[40] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 178.

future possibilities to be affected, changed, re-oriented. Affect theory offers a lens to investigate how systems of power and knowledge are mapped onto bodies and subsequently shape the thoughts and actions these bodies take. Donovan Schaefer opens up new possibilities to consider the religious, including ritual. Sara Ahmed reminds of how sticky objects are, how bodies are marked by proximity with them. The encounter also leaves bodies' marks upon objects, even ritual objects. In the exchange of those impressions, histories are created from the traces, histories that orient bodies toward certain objects in certain ways. Brian Massumi delves into the political nature of affect, creating space to talk about microperceptions and the ways bodies can be subtly shaped without cognitive awareness. Bodies are shaped by the worlds they occupy, including the objects and others that inhabit them. And in the shaping of bodies and worlds, ritualizing proliferates.

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